

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15

EB-08 OMB-01 TRSE-00 FEAE-00 OES-06 /095 W

-----241857Z 023596 /44

R 241455Z JAN 77

FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7008

UNCLAS JIDDA 0644

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, SA, US

SUBJECT: SAUDI PRESS ON SAUDI-US RELATIONS

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARAB NEWS ON JANUARY 24 CARRIED THE FOLLOWING EDITORIAL ON SAUDI-US RELATIONS AND THE US ROLE IN THE SEARCH FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE.

BEGIN TEXT: THE U.S. FACTOR

IN TELEGRAMS TO PRESIDENT JIMMY CARTER CONGRATULATING HIM ON HIS INAUGURATION, BOTH KING KHALED AND CROWN PRINCE FADH HAVE MADE FLEETING REMARKS TO JUST AND LASTING PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST. THAT THE REMARKS HAVE NOT BEEN MORE SPECIFIC OR DETAILED COULD ONLY BE EXPLAINED IN LIGHT OF THE FORMALITY OF THE OCCASION. BUT THE FACT THAT THE TWO SAUDI LEADERS HAVE SEIZED EVEN THE OPPORTUNITY OF A CONGRATULATORY TELEGRAM TO REMIND MR. CARTER OF MIDDLE EAST PEACE MUST NOT GO UNNOTICED.

SAUDI ARABIA--THE VISIT OF PRESIDENT VALERY GISCARD D'ESTAING NOTWITHSTANDING--CONTINUES TO PIN ITS GREATEST HOPE ON THE AMERICAN FACTOR IN THE MIDDLE EAST. THE REASONS ARE SIMPLY THOSE OF REALPOLITIK, IF ONE MAY USE THE EXPRESSION, RATHER THAN ANY PREFERENCE FOR THE AMERICANS. IF THE MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM IS TO BE SOLVED, THE US WILL BE THE PARTY TO

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PLAY THE MAJOR ROLE--A FACT THAT PRESIDENT SADAT HAS BEEN QUICK TO GRASP AFTER IT ESCAPED PRESIDENT NASSER'S NOTICE FOR YEARS. EGYPT'S ECONOMIC TROUBLES MAY HAVE STOLEN THE LIME-LIGHT IN RECENT DAYS, BUT THE FACT REMAINS THAT ISRAEL IS IN EVEN MORE DIRE ECONOMIC STRAITS AND THAT WITHOUT CONTINUING HEAVY AMERICAN ECONOMIC SUPPORT ISRAEL WILL COLLAPSE IN NO TIME. AND IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT THE US IS ALSO SUS-

TAINING ISRAEL MILITARILY.

SO, WHEN THE SAUDIS HELD OUT IN DECEMBER FOR A MERE FIVE PER CENT INCREASE IN THE PRICE OF OIL AGAINST 10 AND LATER ANOTHER FIVE BY 11 OTHER OPEC STATES, THEIR EYES WERE ON THE U.S. RATHER THAN FRANCE AND WESTERN EUROPE. SINCE DECEMBER, SAUDI LEADERS HAVE REPEATED IN QUITE SPECIFIC DETAIL THEIR VIEW THAT THE SAUDI MODERATION AT DOHA MUST BE REWARDED. SAUDI ARABIA IS NOT AFTER ANY PERSONAL GAIN; IT WANTS SETTLEMENT OF THE PALESTINE QUESTION THAT UPHOLDS PALESTINIAN NATIONAL RIGHTS. THE SAUDIS ARE NOT ASKING FOR MIRACLES. NOR ARE THEY ASKING THE AMERICANS TO SETTLE THE PALESTINE QUESTION TOMORROW. THEY HAVE ALSO MADE CLEAR THAT THEY WILL BE SATISFIED OVER THE FEW COMING MONTHS WITH A SIMPLE MOVEMENT TOWARD PEACE. IN OTHER WORDS, THEY SIMPLY WANT TO SEE THE WHOLE PROCESS SET IN MOTION.

IT IS NOT DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE WHAT KIND OF TIME-LIMIT THE SAUDIS HAVE IN MIND. THE NEXT CONFERENCE OF OPEC IS DUE IN JULY. IF NO PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE BY THEN, THEY MAY FEEL FREE TO RECONSIDER THEIR STAND ON OIL PRICES. THEIR POSITION IS PRACTICALLY UNASSAILABLE. THERE IS A CONSENSUS OF OPINION THAT THE 11 OPEC STATES WILL NOT BE ABLE TO GO AHEAD WITH THEIR SECOND PRICE INCREASE SO LONG AS SAUDI ARABIA IS KEEPING ITS PRICES DOWN. IN FACT, THERE IS ALREADY TALK THAT THE 10 PER CENT INCREASE MAY NOT WORK AFTER ALL. THE U.S. MUST KEEP THE SAUDIS SATISFIED IF OIL PRICES ARE TO BE KEPT WITHIN LIMITS.

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AS FOR FRANCE AND WESTERN EUROPE, IT IS SIMPLY THAT IT WILL BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO KEEP THEM ON THE SIDE OF THE ARABS. THEY ARE A POSITIVE BUT NOT A DECIDING FACTOR. THEIR SUPPORT, HOWEVER, GAINS ADDED SIGNIFICANCE BECAUSE THEY HAVE SHOWN THEMSELVES, ESPECIALLY FRANCE, MORE INCLINED TO COOPERATE WITH THE ARABS ON A BASIS OF RESPECT AND EQUALITY. IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, ONE CANNOT ASK FOR MORE.
END TEXT.
PORTER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, FOREIGN RELATIONS
Control Number: n/a
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Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770125/aaaaavuz.tel
Line Count: 106
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 33242bd2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
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Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3523804
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SAUDI PRESS ON SAUDI-US RELATIONS THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARAB NEWS ON JANUARY 24 CARRIED THE FOLLOWING EDITORIAL ON SAUDI-US RELATIONS AND THE US
TAGS: PFOR, SA, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/33242bd2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009